



Advent 2017

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News and Views

The La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (LDCCW)

Serves the deaneries of:

Arcadia, Chippewa Falls, Durand, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Marshfield, Prairie du Chien, Richland Center, Stevens Point, Thorp, Tomah, Wausau and Wisconsin Rapids



Season's Blessings from your President

Another hectic Christmas season is winding down. As we write Christmas cards and letters, it's a time to look back over the year. We marvel at how our families have changed; maybe you welcomed a new baby into the family, or perhaps you lost a loved one. We enjoy receiving Christmas cards and photos from friends and family members who share in this tradition. I hope you all are having a blessed

Advent and that you will celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ with your families on Christmas.

Here are a few things I'd like to share with you. I very much enjoyed attending many of your **Fall Assemblies**. Lots of traveling is involved as Diocesan president, but worth every minute to see both large and small groups of women celebrating their faith throughout the Diocese. You are all an inspiration to the women in your deaneries, and I thank you for serving as presidents! Thanks to the other Board members who attended your Assemblies when I couldn't make it.

The **Share Shop** at Sts. Peter and Paul in Independence on October 28 was a success! Arcadia Deanery president Deb Kujak and the ladies did a wonderful job organizing this event for us. A special thanks to the women of Sts. Peter and Paul PCCW who made us feel welcome and served a delicious lunch. I'm especially grateful because they worked at another big event at their church the day before. Over half of our Deanery presidents were present with their banners and many had something to share, thus the title Share Shop. Mass with Father Woody Pace was very special; Father stayed with us for much of the event. Bill Baxa talked to us about the history of the church and remodeling. Moira Kneer's presentation *With Age Comes Wisdom...of a Sort* was great. Moira never ceases to inspire and entertain. In-coming president Lorraine was introduced and, I'm sure, will prove to be an effective, energetic president for 2018-2020!



President Kathy's Message continued

Parents Sharing Books (PSS) is a program through Literacy Chippewa Valley (LCV) which is based in Eau Claire. The LDCCW budgets money for our **Recordable Books** project which proved in the last 2 years to be difficult because a jail or prison to work with wasn't an option for us. When LCV was approached last year there was positive feedback for us to continue our project through them. *Parents Sharing Books* is available in the jail system in Dunn, Chippewa and Eau Claire Counties. Their process is as follows: A letter is sent to each family asking for permission to participate. New books and blank CDs are purchased or donated for the project. The inmates choose a book to read. LCV staff goes into the jails and are there when the books are read and recorded. The readings are burned to CDs in the LVC office. Volunteers wrap the books, CDs and bookmarks which are mailed to the children whose parents can't be with them for the holidays. An estimated 30-40% of the readers this year were women and 80-90 children received books read by their parents. Thank you, Literacy Chippewa Valley for letting us partner with you these past 2 years.

The Diocese of La Crosse is celebrating its **Sesquicentennial** in 2018! Here is the link containing information including the dates each Deanery will be hosting events. <https://diolc.org/150>. Click on the bars in the upper right of the screen to view them.

The actual anniversary date is March 3, 2018; events begin with a Sesquicentennial School Mass for Prairie du Chien and Richland Center Deaneries - Richland Center and ends on October 7 with a Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman Mass followed by a reception at the La Crosse Center - La Crosse. Please check the calendar to see when your Deanery will be celebrating this special event. We have so much to be thankful for in our Diocese. We have a supportive Bishop and many priests who work with our Councils of Catholic Women from parish to diocesan levels. Let's pray that our CCWs continue to flourish as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops hoped when they founded the National Council of Catholic Women almost 100 years ago. And let's work to make the Diocese of La Crosse Sesquicentennial a success!

You probably received a *Save the Date* message about a visit from the **National Council of Catholic Women's Leadership Team** to La Crosse on August 4, 2018. They are sure to enlighten and energize those of us who can attend. The event is sponsored by the Province of Milwaukee and the La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Please mark your calendars! More information to come during the Spring and Summer.

The LDCCW **2018 Convention** will be held at St. Anne's in Wausau on Saturday, April 21. Wausau Deanery president Natalie Goeden chose an excellent location for this convention; she and her committee members are working hard to make it a wonderful event as we end one term of officers and welcome the next! We will have our last LDCCW Board Meeting on Friday, April 20. All Deanery presidents and Executive Board members are requested to attend if at all possible. For your convenience, rooms have been reserved at a local hotel. Complete information will be available at our next Board Meeting at the Comfort Inn in Black River Falls on January 6.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Kathy

Kathy Herfel
President
La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women



Be the Bearer of Hope, Joy and Mercy

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13



Participants who gathered together to enjoy Shareshop Day

Moira Kneer – keynote speaker colorfully entertaining the audience



Christ the King Sunday

Melanie Frei, Vice President



My husband says I am allergic to unhappy endings in books and movies. He is absolutely right. I have been in love with happy endings ever since I realized as a little girl that my favorite story was Cinderella. It still is. That is why the liturgical day we just celebrated is my *favorite* of the whole liturgical calendar year—Christ the King Sunday. It is the day we celebrate “the end of the story”—when Christ is seated on the throne and He is the ultimate winner of every battle. Perfect good overcomes all evil. It is THE “and they lived happily ever after” day—the one we can look forward to with absolute hope.

This victorious day is then followed by my favorite liturgical season—Advent. Now we get to hear the story all over again! As we are preparing our hearts to celebrate the God of the Universe becoming human, we are also reminded by the readings of His *second* coming as King, and that great Day of the Lord. The message is abundantly clear, from the shouts of John the Baptist, to the wise virgins, to the care of Mother Church—be prepared, be ready, you don’t know when the “end of the story” will come!

God bless your Advent.
Love, Melanie Frei
LDCCW Vice President



All I Want for Christmas

Candace V. McGrath, Spirituality Chair



Christmas has become so commercialized. We see lots of car commercials with big bows on the cars. Everyone wants to get the children a special toy like the Fisher Price Teach 'n Tag Movi robot which is interactive with the toddlers, before they're sold out. And who doesn't want to go shopping on Black Friday or Cyber Monday?

We need to put the Mass back into Christmas. This time of holiday cheer, lights and decorations is the best time to share our faith with family and all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Just a simple, "Merry Christmas" to everyone you pass by is a great way to share our love of Christ in this Holy Season of Joy.

I love my sister Chrystine dearly. She lives in Pennsylvania. We were Confirmed as Methodists at the same time in high school. She married into a Catholic family and maintains her identity as a Methodist. She has three children, Ciara, who is two and the twins, Jaiden and Mason who were born July 31st of this year. I'll be their Godmother and I've thought a lot about what to give them for Christmas this year. I run a Catholic Book Fair at my church so I bought the children Catholic Storybooks. I bought her husband a Catholic Book about being a good father. And I'll buy my sister earrings. I feel good about putting Catholic Books in her home.

Christmas Eve is very special to me because my family comes over to my house for dinner and to open presents. There's my brother, his wife and my nephew Liam who is one. My other sister comes over with her three children. My mother comes over with her husband. And, of course, my son Chrystopher comes home from college to be with us. I keep a tradition alive from when I used to go to Christmas Eve at my grandmother's house and that is to read the Christmas story out of the Family Bible between dinner and opening presents. Most of my family is not Catholic but they don't mind hearing the story of when our Savior was born.

My son Chrystopher, rarely goes to church with me and is awful in giving gifts. Maybe I shouldn't say that. He often gives me decks of Yu-Gi-Oh cards, from the game he plays and wins at tournaments. When he was little I would buy myself presents and tell him they were from him. I got some nice presents that way. Recently I've started a new tradition with my son. I tell him that all I want for Christmas is for him to go to Mass with me. And he does. Of course, that's the only present I get but that's okay. And that's why I love Christmas.

Merry Christmas!



Know that Jesus is Present with YOU

Judy Conner, Leadership Chair

Gifts, errands, running here and there, rushing to events and parties; that seems to be what Christmas is all about in our secular world. Most of us reading this today are well aware the reason for the season is to remind of Jesus' gift to us as our Savior. He loved us so much! He still does!! We are daughters and sons of the king!! And he wants to be right there with you in every moment of your day.



How can we keep the hope alive in a material world? How can we refocus our Advent and Christmas to really absorb the true meaning? I encourage you to stop to take 5-10 deep breaths each day of Advent and use that time to know that Jesus is present with you. Talk to him about making Advent and Christmas more meaningful to you.

As leaders in the Catholic Church, yes you are leaders, each and every one of you, reach out to those around you to remind them of the real reason for the season. Instead of a physical gift, consider the giving of a smile, a word of encouragement; give them time - you taking time to listen to them when maybe no one else does. When you say how are you-go a step further and ask how is your heart (soul) today and take the time to listen to them, look them in the eye and show you care, for through you, God is loving them.

And of course, don't forget you can gift a woman a membership to the National Council of Catholic Women!

Blessed Advent, Blessed Christmas to each and every one of you. May your holiday gatherings be a time of peace, thanksgiving and joy ☺



God Speaks to Our Spirit

Lorraine Riedl, President-Elect



We are coming into a very busy season in a very busy world. In a meditation, written by Mother Angelica, she said that God speaks to our spirit; but we are so busy that we do not hear His voice, so He can't fill our emptiness. Let's make this a joy filled holiday season.

1. Put First Things First

Stephen Covey, the author of "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" in his books and planners promotes people should take a moment to determine what we value, and what we find important, and plan around these "big rocks" in our lives before the "sand" fills in all the gaps. Put the important things in your life first on your priority list. Spend time building relationships!

2. Have no unrealistic expectations.

We sometimes have sentimental and nostalgic expectations of how holiday events will play out. Although the Norman Rockwell picture perfect family gathering is what we might have in mind, we need to realize we cannot control the actions and attitudes of other people. So, we shouldn't be overly disappointed when the kids make a mess or the gravy is a little lumpy. Really, it's all okay. Even the "disasters" make for great stories - - later!

3. Be Gift to others

There is a child in me who still loves to receive gifts! There's also the "mom" in me who loves to find the absolutely "perfect gift" for the family members. I can get disappointed when they don't like what I bought them or I don't get what I was hoping for. I need to remember that the giver-recipient relationship is far more important than the gift. Love is willing good for the other, for the other's sake.

4. Practice the Presence of God

Brother Lawrence, a 17th century Carmelite monk, promoted living in the present moment because God is "I AM" not "I was" or "I will be." God is in the present moment. In the book *The Practice of the Presence of God* he writes, "He does not ask much of us, merely a thought of Him from time to time, a little act of adoration, sometimes to ask for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, at other times to thank Him for the graces, past and present, He has bestowed on you, in the midst of your troubles to take solace in Him as often as you can. Lift up your heart to Him during your meals and in company; the least little remembrance will always be the most pleasing to Him. One need not cry out very loudly; He is nearer to us than we think."

Detachment in a busy world

All of these can be summarized as detachment; not in the being aloof sense, but on the Catholic, spiritual sense. Spiritual detachment is a process that frees us from whatever interferes with our spiritual growth. Detachment helps us avoid disordered inclinations and relationships with persons or things.

What are you attached to? Expectations. Praise. Material things. Traditions. A perfect house.

"Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

Give it to God. Listen for Him. He's closer than you think. Only He can fill our emptiness.

Blessed Holy Days to you and your families!
Lorraine Riedl, President - Elect

The First Christmas

Lu Miller, Past President
From the Office of Public Relations/Communications



The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women extends to you and your families a Joyous and Blessed-filled holiday season and as we look forward to a new year, we enter those days with new challenges and new adventures ahead. We need to remember as we close out 2017 those who have gone through hardships; those going through pain and those who have gone before us to their eternal home.



Cards can say so much – they communicate to us at different times in our lives (sometimes involving a celebration of sorts; other times to convey a thank you and other times encouraging us on).

The La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women created a memorial page of intentions in remembrance of the souls who have passed in our lives. This page can be located out in our web page. If someone special in your life passes, please know we are here to remember their soul and pray over their soul. In the upcoming year and for years ahead we will continue doing this as it is our wish that no one will ever be forgotten and that we are a part of the healing process for those in need.

I always enjoy personalizing my reports; perhaps through communications of a story or communication of a reflection. I will do both in that this reflection is written around a story fitting to this time of the year. While the First Christmas traditionally means the celebration and anticipation of Christmas for the infant who is enjoying it for the first time, for others the First Christmas means it is a time of a celebration of remembrance; a time without. Not having that loved around during that first Christmas holiday season, is the most difficult to work through for families.

The First Christmas

For the little baby eager to see the Christmas tree encircled in lights; or when setting those little eyes on a bearded man, sitting in a chair, dressed in all red; for this little child, it is the first Christmas

There are the smiles coming forward in seeing those little eyes become large, whether in excitement or possibly even a little bit of fear;

Looking over and seeing a little one all bundled up, one knows how special this first Christmas and the many Christmases to come will be;

As one goes through the motions of making it the best Christmas ever, the first Christmas with;

Others go through the motions of making Christmas the most tolerable; the first Christmas without;

At the family gathering as in so many years past, a chair once occupied at the table now sits empty.

There are no tags with that person's name on; attached to presents no longer being bought that carries over to a changed gift opening time.

At the gathering; the sounds of Christmas this year have quieted down; the movies still play; conversations still attempt to take place; the slamming of doors of others' arrival not heard as much;

When one thinks about it, as there was always a First Christmas for every one of us; a first Christmas with the beginning of traditions and people; it will for each of us some day turn into, yet, another first Christmas, with an entirely different meaning to this time of year but still to remain a first Christmas.

UPDATE ON NOMINATIONS

Recruiting new leadership; leadership that took a break and has made the decision to return –whatever the situation is, we are so fortunate to have such wonderful leadership across the Diocese of La Crosse. Thank you for all that you represent in your councils, whether in your parish, your deanery or your diocese.

Currently, we are still actively recruiting for the offices of Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer for the La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women board. The information for these positions along with the Nomination Committee contacts may be found out on the ldccw.org website. Thank you.



La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women is proud to host an National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) Leadership Training Day on **Saturday, August 4, 2018**, at Mary, Mother of the Church Parish in La Crosse. This day will be presented by two national trainers from the NCCW Leadership Training Development Team. The trainers are Council members just like us!

Why attend?

To sharpen skills for everyday life and leadership.

To spend a day learning and sharing with other women.

To enhance your personal spiritual life.

COME JOIN US!



Marie Fleisner, LDCCW Pro-Life



Each time I read the Nativity story in the Gospel of Luke, I am struck by how it relates to the abortion controversy in our modern society.

As Catholic Christians we believe that every human being is created with dignity, because **every** human being is made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-28). This human dignity begins in the womb at the very moment of conception (Ps. 139:15; Job 31:15). We also believe that the only one who has authority to give life and to take life is God alone. He alone is the creator, giver, and sustainer of life; therefore, He alone has the authority to take life (Job 1:21; Acts 17:25).

This is in stark contrast to the beliefs of those who call themselves “pro-choice.” They believe that a woman has the right to choose whether or not the baby growing inside her womb can live or die. They believe the baby does not have dignity; the baby is not a person while in its gestational phase. They believe there is no outside authority that has the right to tell a woman what she can or cannot do to her body (or the baby growing within it). Even though science has proven that life begins at conception, these people refuse to see the unborn baby in the womb as a separate human being. Sadly, they believe abortion is a procedure to remove unwanted tissue from their body.

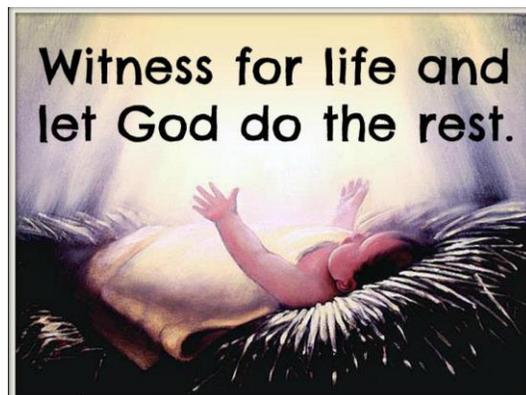
Our Lord Jesus Christ entered our world through the womb of a woman. His human body formed during gestation, he was nourished by his mother, and he was born like any other baby. He was so completely human that he would have even had a belly-button. His experience of gestation was like that of every other baby conceived in its mother’s womb (with the obvious exception of being conceived by the Holy Spirit!)

Think about Mary’s circumstances. What would those in the pro-choice movement have told Mary, an unwed teenager? This pregnancy will ruin your life. This baby will be a huge inconvenience for you. You have a choice. You don’t have to carry this child. It’s your body; do what’s in your own best interest. Of course, we already know that Mary said “Yes” to doing God’s will, putting aside her own desires. Mary embraced God’s authority over her life. In her obedience and humility, she said “Yes” to God’s plan. Before the angel appeared to her, she likely had her own plan for what her life would look like, and this baby was probably not part of that plan. But Mary said “Yes. Yes, I will carry this life within me. Yes, I will protect this life. Yes, I will respect the dignity of this tiny life growing inside me. Yes, God, your plan is bigger than mine.” Mary embraced God’s plan, even if it was different than her own. She embraced the truth that her body was not ultimately hers, but rather it belonged to God. Scripture tells us that Mary embraced her role and loved her child.

At its center, the pro-choice perspective on pregnancy is a consequence of our relativistic worldview. I will do what I want; I will do what feels good **for me!** It denies God’s authority over our lives and our bodies. It denies God his right to give and take away life, giving that right to ourselves. It denies God’s purpose in being glorified through the personhood of infants in the womb by reducing them to clumps of tissue. What is at the core of our worldview? Either there is a God and He rules, or there is no god at all, and therefore, I rule.

If we call ourselves Christians, then this worldview that Mary employed (God is God and I am not) should be the same worldview we hold. If we truly follow Jesus, accept him as our Savior, and accept God as our Father, then we have the same way of thinking that a young Jewish peasant girl had so many centuries ago!

Jesus entered this world in a way much like we did. Mary embraced life because she embraced God’s authority over life, and through her obedience the most wonderful gift imaginable came to humanity. And that gift continues to offer the forgiveness and eternal life described in the Gospels. We need only say “Yes” to God’s plan and will for our life, which includes accepting and protecting the dignity of all human life.



MESSAGE FROM CAROL BRENNAN, PROVINCE DIRECTOR



I was recently installed as Milwaukee Province Director for the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW). Many of you know me from my past years in CCW but I will share a little more information about myself.

John and I have been married for 52 years, have 3 children and 7 grandchildren. We were transferred around a lot, lived in 4 different states, 7 cities and several different dioceses so learned to adapt to change. We enjoyed every place we lived and being an RN I could find a job where ever we went. When John retired we moved back to Wisconsin to be near the family, settled in Berlin and are members of All Saints Parish, Berlin, Madison Diocese. I joined CCW 17 years ago and haven't looked back. This is an organization that challenges me to grow spiritually and to put my faith into action – it challenges me to reach out to others.

In my new position I will serve and represent all five arch/dioceses in Wisconsin as liaison from NCCW to the dioceses. NCCW's mission statement is to "act to support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service". Other than my work on and with the NCCW Board my job is to promote NCCW, keep us all connected and informed. If you have issues or concerns don't hesitate to contact me.

The NCCW Convention theme was 97 years Living the Joy of the Gospel. You will hear the theme "Joy" often in the future. Our new NCCW President, Maribeth Stewart, has named her themes for her term: "NCCW: Reflecting the Joy of God..." with a different emphasis each year.

Jean Kelly, our Milwaukee Past Province Director was installed as NCCW President-Elect. It will be a joy working with her. Wisconsin has had so many active members of NCCW, they have been great examples for us. Special thanks to Lucille Brandner for all you have done for us these past two years.

We would like all women to unite in prayer and we ask that in your daily prayers: 1. Pray for all lapsed Catholics and 2. Pray for our country – for its safety and for a return to Godliness.



SAVE THE DATE: AUGUST 4, 2018 for LTD Workshop in La Cross which will be sponsored by the entire Province. I look forward to working with all of you and attending your conventions and special events. Please keep me in your prayers these next two years as I continue my faith journey.

Blessings,
Carol Brennan, Milwaukee Province Director
Carolbrennan31@gmail.com 920.279.0604
W1533 Gladys Ct., Berlin, WI 54923



NCCW Membership Form

Be the Voice of Catholic Women

When you join the National Council of Catholic Women, you are part of a national organization that speaks for your Catholic values and supports, empowers and educates all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service.

NCCW Individual members also:

- * Are represented at the biannual meetings of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- * Have access to NCCW Spirituality, Leadership and Service Commissions' programs and resources
- * Are invited to serve on NCCW Commission teams and Committees
- * Share friendships with other Catholic women from all over the country
- * Are represented at the United Nations, The World Union of Catholic Women Organisations (WUCWO), Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, Religious Alliance Against Pornography
- * Share in Partnerships and Collaborations with Catholic Relief Services, Cross Catholic Outreach, Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Catholic Climate Covenant
- * Can participate in Monthly Advocacy and Leadership Calls
- * Access to NCCW website members' only site (under development)

Please select your membership category:

Supporting Member (\$100) – Benefits Include:

- * Annual subscription to the quarterly *Catholic Woman* magazine
- * Annual subscription to the monthly *NCCW Connect* e-newsletter
- * Eligibility to vote in NCCW elections and at the Annual Business meeting

Exclusive Benefits for Supporting Members Only:

- * Supporting Member pin that demonstrates your commitment to NCCW
- * Special Supporting Member ribbon at Annual Convention

Individual Member (\$50) – Benefits Include:

- * Annual subscription to the quarterly *Catholic Woman* magazine
- * Annual subscription to the monthly *NCCW Connect* e-newsletter
- * Eligibility to vote in NCCW elections and at the Annual Business meeting

I wish to pay for my membership by:

Credit Card Check (enclosed) made payable to NCCW check # _____

Credit Card Information:

MasterCard Visa Discover

Name as it appears on card _____

Credit Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____ Security Code _____

Member Information: Enroll _____ Renew _____ Member # (found on back of magazine) _____

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Parish and Diocese Information:

Parish Name _____ Parish City/State _____

My Diocese _____ My Province _____

Please return this application with your check or credit card information to the following address:
Membership Department, National Council of Catholic Women 200 N Glebe Rd, Suite 725
Arlington, VA 22203, Phone: 703.224.0990, Fax: 703.224.0991 membership@nccw.org